

Mary Lou Terrien

From: Jaye Beeler Jelier <jayebeeler@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 10:57 AM
To: Mary Lou Terrien
Subject: Love our historic district - don't weaken it!

February 22, 2016

To Local Government House Committee Clerk, Mary Lou Terrien,

I am 100 percent against the proposed HB5232 Preservation Modernization Act – I find it absolutely ridiculous that – a nonresident of historic districts and/or a central city address – proposes to destroy one of the most effective economic development tools and a proven winner that has worked to restore the integrity of our nation's living history. No thank you! I adore living, working, gardening, entertaining and raising our three grade school-age children in our wonderfully, walkable historic district. It makes me wonder, whose really behind this legislation??? Just for the record, historic designation infringes less on property rights than those living in gated communities and condominiums - perhaps they're next.

Patiently, I will try to explain a few pertinent facts – since the proposed legislation is so obviously clueless on many fronts.

One, registered historic districts stabilize central city neighborhoods and the residents who live there. Heritage Hill in Grand Rapids is a lovely physical bridge between downtown and top-notch residential housing from Grand Rapids Community College to East Grand Rapids with Heritage Hill, Cherry Hill and Fairmount Square. Property taxes in Heritage Hill are the strongest in the city of Grand Rapids because the historic district label preserves its housing to remain the largest continuous historic district in the country – that the nation! When the real estate bubble burst, our property taxes never bottomed out because our houses are hard to come by. Bird's eye maple paneling, stained glass windows, parquet flooring, towering 12 foot ceilings and gingerbread on the porch are the kinds of architectural details that put the oomph in our real estate.

Two, Heritage Hill keeps Grand Rapids forever beautiful because rules are designed to maintain the integrity of the properties. People come from near and far to walk our preserved streets, snapping photos, visiting the Frank Lloyd Wright house, taking the Heritage Hill historic tour of homes, dining in our charming centuries-old building. Our historic district is not a cookie cutter planned unit that looks like every other faceless sprawling exurb in America. It's unique to Michigan and harkens to our wonderful logging heritage.

Three, the walkable business district Uptown includes Heritage Hill because it's a thriving mixed-use community designed for people to live -- locally and authentically. Rather than rush off to big box chains for

every need and whim, we shop locally literally putting our money in the hands of the men and women who own the independent neighborhood shops, restaurants and markets which in turn keep the local dollars circulating around our city and state.

Four, registered historic districts are an important component to “Cool City USA” and tapping into the creative class. Young professionals want to live in cities that are walkable, unique, full of originality that sparks growth and innovation. There’s a reason why we love Paris France, Venice Italy, and London England – walkable city bursting with preservation of its buildings and streets, and a sense of place.

Five, registered historic districts with its history, architecture, culture and energy create a sum that is greater than all its parts. It would be a shame to weaken or destroy something that has worked so happily to make Michigan cities desirable locations in otherwise forgotten rust-belt cities. For all the complainers, go buy a centuries old house located outside a registered historic district and have all it – all you want. Just don’t go screwing up ‘our’ good thing because we all benefit from strong cities. Have we learned no lessons from Detroit and Flint. The historic district designation in Grand Rapids has resulted in greater appreciation of these properties than any other real-estate in the West Michigan area over the last 30 years. Vote NO!

Sincerely,

Jaye Beeler Jelier

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